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SUBJECT: ITU UPDATE ON UPCOMING EVENTS

¶1. SUMMARY: ITU is making progress on the Child Online Protection initiative, World Telecommunication Policy Forum, regional Telecom Development Conferences, and preparations for the ITU Telecom World tradeshow. The economic downturn has a silver lining for the industry as businesses substitute video conferencing for travel, but ITU is feeling the effects through lower revenues for trade shows.
END SUMMARY.

¶2. International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Secretary General Hamadoun Toure hosted member state Ambassadors in Geneva on March 18 to provide a snapshot of ITU activities and plans.

Protecting Children

¶3. Doreen Bogdan, Head of Strategic Planning and Membership, announced ITU will dedicate part of the World Telecom and Information Society Day (May 17) to the Child Online Protection Initiative. ITU launched the initiative in November 2008 to identify risks to children in cyberspace, raise awareness, share knowledge, and facilitate international partnerships to develop ways to minimize risks. Delegates from Morocco and Colombia pointed out that while protecting children online is worthwhile, much of the world's children lack any online access at all, and called for help for developing countries. The French DCM advocated lowering internet fees, while the delegate from Egypt argued ITU should develop more than a code of conduct. Toure responded on the latter point that in terms of an international framework, ITU avoids resolutions or treaties that politicize its technical work. Charge applauded the ITU initiative, and noted US support.

World Telecom Policy Forum & Economic Crisis

¶4. Toure remarked that the World Telecom Policy Forum, to be held in Lisbon April 22-24, will no longer be a 'cluster event' on a single theme as in the past, but will cover four topics: convergence, next generation networks, ITU regulations and emerging issues. A special session on April 21 about how the telecom industry might help mitigate the effects of the financial crisis will precede the Forum. Toure expressed his opinion that the economic crisis is helping the telecom industry (as travel gets cut, people are relying more on phone calls and data transfers), and touted ITU's recent publication of a report on the financial crisis (available online at http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/emerging_trends/crisis/index.html).

¶5. Other upcoming regional events were described by ITU officials, and are available in detail on the ITU website. ITU also distributed materials predicting lower revenues for trade shows this year such as the World Telecom 2009.

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